

# Bitterroot National Forest

1801 N. 1st Street, Hamilton, MT 59840 (406) 363-7100

## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Nan Christianson**  
**Public Affairs Officer (Acting)**  
**Work Phone - (406) 363-7113**  
**Cell Phone – (406) 531-1130**

### **Higher, Dryer Temps Generate More Active Burning on Gash Creek Fire**

**Hamilton, MT; September 3, 2006** --- Current Size: 8200 Acres Containment: 65%

The Gash Creek Fire was much more active today than it has been in recent days, adding at least 100 acres to its size on Sunday. Hans Smith, the Incident Commander, commented that "with the warmer temperatures and lower relative humidity, the fire became more active than it has been in the past week. Most of the active burning occurred in the upper or western end Sweathouse Creek drainage, with frequent short runs and limited crowning." Smith reported that there was very little active fire in the Big Creek drainage and was pleased that the area burned by the 2003 Big Creek Fire continues to provide an effective deterrent to the fire movement.

Closures and restrictions: The fire closure area includes: the **upper reaches of Gash Creek, Sweathouse Creek, Smith Creek and lower reaches of Big Creek areas**. This area closure also includes **all roads and trails in these areas**. The prohibitions cited in the closure order are due to active fire conditions and expected future fire behavior based on high wind weather conditions. These areas are closed to ensure public and firefighter safety. Stage II Fire Restrictions are still in effect due to the hot and dry conditions throughout the area.

A few of the wilderness fires burning in the Bitterroot National Forest's portion of the Selway Bitterroot and the Frank Church Wilderness areas have been putting up smoke, but no significant growth has been observed on any of the 13 active fires that are being managed to benefit the wilderness. As the weather is expected to get unseasonably hotter and drier over the next week, these fires may start to burn more intensely and produce more smoke.

For more information on the Gash Creek Fire or the wilderness fires please call Nan Christianson, Bitterroot National Forest Public Affairs Officer (Acting), at (406) 363-7113 or the Stevensville Ranger District at (406) 777-5461.

**Note to the Media – This will be the last update on Bitterroot National Forest fires until Tuesday, September 5, unless significant fire events take place before then. If you have specific questions about fire activity on the forest, please contact Nan Christianson, Acting Public Affairs Officer, at (406) 531-1130.**